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Using English Literature in Higher Secondary EFL Classrooms in Rural Bangladesh: Bridging the Cultures to Facilitate EFL Learning M.A. Dissertation

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Abstract

The present research explores the use of literature in language teaching from a different dimension. It experiments with the use of literature to eliminate cultural alienation from the EFL

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classrooms with the hope that this will eventually facilitate language teaching and learning. The subjects of this study are the students of Higher Secondary level of some small-town colleges of Bangladesh. The basis of the paper is grounded on the assumption that the subjects are intolerant toward the target-language culture, i.e. the Western culture. They are biased with some wrong assumptions about the Western culture, and their sense of ‘otherness’ comes into play in the EFL classrooms all of which set some potential barriers before their learning of English. The study tries to incorporate literary items into language teaching materials keeping cultural similarities at the centre. No language can be taught and learnt without some references to its culture because the development of a language in a community essentially chronicles its culture. Similarly, the literature of a community embodies its language and culture simultaneously. Teaching a foreign language with an emphasis on its culture and its similarity with the native culture is likely to generate a friendly environment into the EFL class. Literature can make the culture of the target language familiar to the learners and thus facilitate learning an SL/FL.

Key words: EFL, Bangladesh, rural schools, culture in EFL learning

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Chapter 1: Introduction

(1.1) Setting the Scene

Keeping in mind the present status of the English language in the whole world, the importance and necessity of learning the language have been a priority in a third world country like Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh bears almost 400 years' legacy of British reign, English is not the second language here. Instead, it is a foreign language because unlike in an Anglophone country, it is learned as a part of the usual school curriculum to pass an examination or as a necessary part of one's education. It is learned in a country where English is not the dominant language. The distinction is important because it makes a lot of differences in the teaching and learning of a language other than the mother tongue. The teacher in an EFL setting assumes that the learners are competent in the mother tongue. On the contrary, the learners in an ESL classroom are usually of different nationalities. As ESL applies to learners who are immigrants or visitors to an Anglophone country, the learners have more opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom. However, the distinction that is more relevant to this research is that an EFL learner has very "limited exposure to the English-speaking culture" (Bell, 2011, para. 3) since this study capitalizes on a notion of target-culture centred learning of EFL.

In Bangladesh, lots of experiments have been done with the national curriculum by the education board in the intermediate level. Sometimes literary texts have been a part of the syllabus, and sometimes they have been solely dependent on language-based texts. To put it more formally, the English language, from the beginning, has been taught and learned by following the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) consciously or unconsciously. Although literature was at the centre of this method, the focus was on the form, not on the content. It focused on learning grammatical rules apparent in the text. Until the late '90s it has been very

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popular and a widely applied method in Bangladesh. However, this method was successful only in 'pen and paper' English. It made the students skilled in the language only for academic purposes. The failure of the students in using the language for communicative purposes made the government really concerned because being skilled only in academic English does not make a person a competent user of that language. So, they brought a wholesale change in the syllabus by introducing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The pedagogical implementation of CLT started later in 2001. The literature part got left out. The materials now are chosen according to the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) as it is the most popular of the recent methods of ELT. The goal of this approach is to ensure the highest use of the language in its usage level. In other words, its purpose is to help the learners use the language successfully in communicative interactions. Naturally the materials became specific in terms of their subject matters as the purposes of communicating in a Second Language/Foreign Language (SL/FL) themselves are specific. On top of it, most of the materials were localized on the ground that situations that match with the learners' experiences are easy for them to handle and increase learner-motivation.

Although the effort was impressive, it bore little fruit. The lack of proper training for the teachers and insufficient supporting materials for the implication of CLT are to be blamed here. Besides, classes too large for pair- or group-work implementation, teachers' reluctance to switch from teacher-centred to learner-centred classes, mother tongue interference (Sarwar, n.d.); difficulties faced by the teachers in making the classroom interactive and integrative with the tasks that are integrating with the four skills, inadequate choice of the notional-functional approach, lack of trained teachers, insufficient classroom activities, inadequate or less standard materials and faulty testing system (Ullah, 2013, p. 204); lack of time for developing

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communicative materials, misconception about CLT, students' low English proficiency and their resistance to participate in communicative class activities (Ansarey, 2012, p. 73) are some of the major reasons why CLT has been a failure in Bangladesh. As a result, unlike in other countries the learners' improvement was and is next to none. We are not talking about the colleges in urban areas here, nor are we talking about the English medium ones. The students there enjoy a lot more facilities than those in the rural areas regarding basically the availability of modern technologies both in the classroom and at home. Here I have taken the students of the colleges in small towns in Bangladesh into consideration.

Besides the failure in the proper implementation of CLT, there are other challenges that both the teachers and students have to face while dealing with the English Language. Different researchers have identified and focused on different reasons that make the English language learning difficult for Bangladeshi students. Rasheed (2012) observes, "There are enormous challenges to both learners and teachers in Bangladeshi mainstream classrooms because of the irregularities within English, the words borrowed from other languages, and the consequent different phonological representations (p. 32). Similarly, Kabir (2012) identifies poverty in Bangladesh, and poorly furnished and overpopulated classrooms as the causes of failure in English language learning. He continues, "Students are also deprived of the modern equipments of a classroom e.g. overhead projector (OHP), CD, DVD, cassette player, white board, multimedia system, display board, etc. Even some of the classrooms in rural areas do not have proper seating arrangements" (p. 209). Again, the 'extremely low level investment' leads to the failure in maintaining the quality of education and cannot ensure proper teaching and learning of English particularly in non-government secondary schools in rural Bangladesh (Hamid, 2011, p. 198). However, very few have noticed the fact that unfamiliarity with and intolerance towards

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the culture of the target language might be very crucial while learning an SL/FL. The purpose of this research is not to verify if the claim has some juice in it. Rather, I will try to postulate a way through which English language learning can be facilitated by familiarizing the students with the Western culture. Thus the students will grow tolerant towards the culture of the target language and the SL/FL itself once they notice the similarities between Bangladeshi and the Western cultures. Moreover, they will notice the logics behind those aspects of the Western culture which make them feel alienated in the English language classrooms because of their dissimilarities with those of Bangladeshi culture. My plan is to call back the literature part in the materials but with some considerable changes in its usage so that we can use it to make Western culture familiar to the learners and thus facilitate EFL learning. In short, the use of literary items in teaching an SL/FL can increase the learners' familiarity with and tolerance towards the target-language culture that can eventually facilitate the learning of that language.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

(2.1) Relation between Language and Culture

Language and culture are intricately tied together. The language of any community reflects its culture as well. While investigating the relationship between culture and language, Jiang (2000) refers to Brown (1994)- “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (as cited in Jiang 2000, p. 328). Alptekin (1992) cites Stewart, Valdes and Byram to substantiate his rationales that “language and culture are inextricably tied together, and that it is impossible to teach a foreign language without its culture base”:

Stewart (1982), for instance, regards the target-language culture as an essential feature of every stage of foreign language learning, and asserts that teaching the formal aspects of the foreign language while referring to the native culture of the learner is virtually useless. Valdes (1986: 121) considers the use of the native culture in foreign language teaching a ‘trap’, leading to a ‘gross misfit’ or an ‘impasse’. Besides, she claims that it is virtually impossible to teach the foreign language without its cultural content. Byram (1988) generally supports the belief that a language cannot be taught separately from its culture. If this is done, he says, it would lead to a denial of a purported fundamental purpose of language learning, namely, giving learners the opportunity to cope with experience in a different way (as cited in Alptekin, 1992, p. 139).

To put it simply, there is no denying the fact that a language inevitably leads to its culture and learning that language similarly refers back to the learners’ knowledge of its culture.

(2.2) The Scenario in Bangladesh’s Context

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As long as the students of higher secondary level in Bangladesh's small towns and rural areas are taken into account, English grammar seems to be the most difficult for them to handle. Although English has been made compulsory throughout primary to higher secondary levels since 1976, there is a very low increase in the students' proficiency level of the language. Rahman, Kabir and Afroze (2006) produced the result of The 1990 Baseline Survey of 1400 students at 20 schools in different parts of the country which showed that:

- In all three categories of schools visited (government, private urban and private rural), the majority of students are not attaining satisfactory levels of proficiency, as measured against the requirements of the syllabus and textbooks in use.
- The situation is particularly serious in the non-government rural schools, where over 95% of the students in Class 6 and 8 are failing to reach the expected standards of proficiency. In addition, over 70% of these students at Class 6 and 80% at Class 8 have a command of the language being taught which is close to non-existent (p. 2).

If this is the situation in the high schools, it can easily be guessed what the actual situation in the higher secondary level can be.

While sharing his findings about Bangladeshi high school students, Mondal (2012a) draws on Lanara's findings where the subjects expressed that "they [first year English major university students] had not learned anything of value in high school due to poor teaching methods, which were characterized by monotonous grammar-translation drill practice" (as cited in Mondal, 2012a, p. 25). With a view to justify his opinion, Mondal also refers to Christensen's study which shows that "most students condemn grammar to be one of the weak aspects of English" (as cited in Mondal, 2012a, p. 25). One reason, perhaps the most crucial one that Hammond (2007) points out "is because learners are taught English almost exclusively using a grammar-

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based approach that emphasizes accuracy” (p. 43). Lightbown and Spada (1999) further the finding and declare that classrooms that emphasize correctness usually result in having inhibited learners who will not take chances using their knowledge to communicate in public. Although these observations are general, they are equally applicable to the students of higher secondary level, particularly in rural area Bangladesh. We, too, have a similar situation in the scenario of the English Language teaching and learning. My opinion is that the use of literary items will help divert the attention of both the learners and the teachers from accuracy to the maximum use of the target language.

(2.3) The Role of Literature in the EFL Classroom

The role of literature in the EFL classroom has been examined several times and many linguistic scholars view literary texts as the bank of endless linguistic elements, incentives for students to ignite interaction in the target language and an effective source of learner motivation. English Literature can introduce students to a range of aspects, not only of the English Language but also of the English culture.

While collecting data from secondary sources I have discovered that the study of language and literature are very much related to each other and can be integrated. The study of literature and language are related to each other in various ways. Brumfit and Carter (1986) have suggested varieties of ways in which the study of literature and language can be integrated and have also experimented with the implications of the use of literature in the language classroom. Their point is that “literary text is almost the only ‘context’ where different varieties of language can be mixed” (p. 8). The use of literature can facilitate and yield positive outcomes in language teaching.

Referring to Hirvella and Belcher, Tasneen (2010) attracts our attention to yet another very interesting potential of literature: “Literature creates a longing for learning the language” (as cited in Tasneen, 2010, p. 175). Literary pieces such as, novels, plays, short stories and fables, especially those that are accompanied by pictures, make people eager to learn the language in order to be able to know what happens next. Chowdhury has taken an extreme stand in this matter: “To try to teach language without the help of literature is doomed to be ineffective” (as cited in Hussain, 2007, p. 114).

Communicative Language Teaching, too, supports the use of literary text in language classroom. Long stresses, “communicative language teaching favors group activities and language-learner interaction. Predictions, creating a scenario, debating topics on or around a text ... all seem to develop naturally out of a literature text, while they are either difficult or impossible with the type of text favored by ‘English for Specific Purposes’” (as cited in Yeasmin, Azad and Ferdoush, 2011, p. 284) . While emphasizing the effectiveness of using literature in EFL classes through a case study on the project “Readers’ Development Program” of the British Council, Bangladesh executed by the Department of English at ASA University Bangladesh(ASAUB), Yeasmin, Azad and Ferdoush (2011) refer to Kramsch (1993) to argue that the real success of communicative approaches to language teaching lies in the ability to involve learners in the dialectic of meaning production which can be easily provided by literary text as it is more dialogic (p. 284).

(2.4) Importance of Culture in EFL Learning

We should now figure out how culture can be learned through literature and also the importance of culture in EFL learning. The use of figurative languages, phrases, idioms in

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literature make the learners able to get familiar with the reasons why and how these markers of language operate as the markers of that culture. Cresswell (2008) puts it thus- “To understand the meaning and use of words is to gain knowledge and insight into the culture of the users of that language” (p. 17).

A better understanding of the target culture helps enhance the motivation of the SL/FL learners: “Learners are most motivated, most open to language input when their emotions, feelings, and attitudes are most engaged” (Tomlinson, 1986, p. 34). McKay (2000) expresses a similar view in that target-language culture fosters learner motivation (p. 7). Knowing the target culture keeps the learners emotionally, hence passionately, involved in learning the language. It is literature that can make it happen. In order to make literature do it “... teachers should help students overcome cultural barriers by informing students of specifically cultural aspects found in the text to be used” (Thom Thom, 2008, p. 121). Target-language culture must be taken into consideration in the SL/FL classrooms.

In her article, Cresswell (2008) talks of four perspectives on culture learning. One of them is intercultural competence (ICC). It implies the ability to interact with as well as accept the perspectives and perceptions of the “other” conscious of the differences from one’s own culture. It is almost impossible to separate the learners’ own cultural perceptions from the target ones. It comes to be more alive through Cresswell’s (2008) reference to Sercu:

[Foreign language teaching] always includes at least two languages and cultures, namely the learners’ own culture and language on the one hand and a foreign culture and language on the other. Therefore, it seems natural to try and raise awareness in learners of the fact that people speaking other languages may also organize and perceive the world in ways different from their own (p. 62).

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It also implies that a comparative approach between the native and target cultures should be of some help in grappling the second one. This idea is further substantiated when Fantini remarks that approach to developing ICC in the learner includes “comparing and contrasting the target culture with the students’ native culture” (as cited in Cresswell, 2008, p. 20). Moreover, “Along with developing proficiency in the foreign language [it] is the development of awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that may lead learners to an understanding of cultures and how they coexist in the global family” (Cresswell, 2008, p. 21). Citron (1995) argues that open-mindedness to other ways of looking at the world may enhance one’s ability to learn a new language (p. 105).

Mondal (2012b) observes that “As English is not the mother tongue of Bangladeshi learners, they [Bangladeshi students] have lacked of [*sic*] the necessary knowledge and cultural preparation to acquire English language” (p. 612). Referring to Lee, he continues “This lack of knowledge disposed learners to experience a cultural shock” (as cited in Mondal 2012b, p. 612). Only better acquaintance with the target culture may rid them of this shock.

Referring to the extra-linguistic characteristics of the target-language culture, Kilickaya (2004) points out, “knowing a language goes beyond the knowledge of grammatical rules, vocabulary items and pronunciation of these items. Successful language learning requires language users to know that culture underlying language in order to get the meaning across” (para. 10). He refers to Shanahan (1997) who contends that “cultural content provides exposure to living language that a foreign language student lacks” (as cited in Kilickaya 2004, para. 11). He also mentions culture as “a helpful tool to make learners feel the need to speak and use the target language” (para. 11).

We cannot also ignore the fact which Canagarajah (1993) too highlights in his study- “...students themselves are alienated from their sociocultural environment [in an ESL/EFL classroom] and there is no attention given to the manner in which their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds can inhibit or foster their learning” (as cited in Calchar, 2000, p. 68). This feeling of alienation can be driven away if it is not assumed that an EFL classroom is a non-political space. In other words, both the students and teachers will have to take it for granted that there *are* differences between the cultures of the native and target language. They must not ignore the existing hierarchy between the two cultures. Homogeneity does count on heterogeneity. In order to profit on homogeneity, the heterogeneous features of the Western and native cultures have to be taken into consideration.

Chapter 3: Getting Started

(3.1) Research Questions

To explore the above issues, I want to focus on the following related questions:

1. In what ways can the implementation of materials taken from literary texts facilitate language teaching and learning?
2. What kind of cultural contents can the literature of the target language import to a different language setting?
3. Do a better access to and an understanding of the target culture really facilitate learning an SL/FL?
4. Is it possible to teach the different grammatical features and functions of language through literature?
5. What are the possible handicaps of using literature in language learning and how can they be overcome?
6. How may the language teachers as well as the learners respond to this attitude- teaching and learning language through literature while referring to the target-language culture?

(3.2) Hypotheses

After identifying the problem that unfamiliarity with the culture of the target language is likely to hinder the teaching and learning of that language, I have figured out a way to overcome it. Apparently, we have to come into contact with the English people in order to become familiar with their culture and life-style. For this we must travel to England or America and stay there for a reasonable period of time which is almost impossible for our students in the rural areas considering the cost and scope. Even satellite channels on TVs are not of any help as people, both urban and rural, are equally fascinated and captured by Hindi channels.

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In such a situation, I have hypothesized that we will come round of the syndrome by using English literature in the language classrooms. By literature, I mean items of literature, such as novel, drama, short stories, poetry, etc. It is not that the idea of using literary items in teaching language is quite new. Researchers like Kachru (1986), McKay (1986), Akyel and Yalçin (1990), Türker (1991), Lazar (1993), Zafeiriadou (2001), Llach (2007), Tasneen (2010) and others have either advocated for or highlighted the flaws of using literature in an SL/FL learning. However, researchers who have advocated for using literature in language teaching have done so in order to turn the boring language classes into interesting and enjoyable ones, thus increasing the learners' motivation. My notion of using literature emerged out of my hypothesis that literature can make the culture of the target language familiar to the SL/FL learners. I believe it is the literature of a community that transports its culture to another community. Once the learners grow familiar with the target culture, they will eventually grow tolerant towards it. Literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practice the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary. Literature can help learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of the 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time literary texts can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the purified world of course books. As we all are human beings- whether English, Chinese, Indian or Bangladeshi- we share some common features of life. Emphasizing these common features and making the learners notice them might be one of the ways to do it. What bars the way is their concept of "belonging to" the native culture. When the learners will discover the features that are universal to all human beings, they will feel that they belong not to their native culture only. Instead, they belong to a universal global culture. The realization that

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they also live through similar experiences should operate in changing their attitude towards the Western culture.

(3.3) Participants

The subjects of my study were the teachers and students of Higher Secondary level from the small-town colleges of Bangladesh. I selected three colleges from two different districts in North Bengal- Shahid Zia Degree College and Joypurhat Women's College from the district of Joypurhat and Hakimpur Women's College from the district of Dinajpur in Rajshahi Division. 187 students and 5 teachers took part in this study. The reason behind choosing the rural area colleges is that the students of these areas are left out from many advantages that the students in the urban areas enjoy. They are lagging behind in technology and other privileges of modern times. They are also deprived of the attention that should be paid to their educational affairs. When the question of learning English comes, the urban area students are several steps ahead of the rural area students. It is time that they should be paid the due attention. Moreover, I have chosen these particular areas because I myself was a student of one of these colleges. As I am from North Bengal as well, my predictions of the students' proficiency level and their attitudes regarding EFL learning are supposed to be more accurate. Those correct predictions helped me to decide on the difficulty levels of the materials and exercises too.

(3.4) Methodology

I have applied different research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, while conducting the research. Among the qualitative methods, the first and foremost was class-conduct and observation. I conducted and observed English language classes in three different institutions where I used materials that I developed using different English literary texts. First of all I had the students complete the survey questionnaire (See Appendix A). Then I divided them into two

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groups. One of the groups attended a class with a teacher who taught them the structure of affirmative sentence, inverted sentence structure, and the use of past simple tense in narrative purposes. Here the teachers used *Applied English Grammar and Composition: Anglo-Bengali for High Schools* by P. C. Das. The book was first published by Kala Khan Dey in Kolkata in 1993. This book is widely used by the teachers in the colleges in this area. The other group attended a class with me where I used the materials that I myself developed to teach the same language features (See Appendix B). At the end I gave a quiz test (See Appendix C) to both the groups in order to examine the differences in the performances of these two groups. I have also audio-taped and video-taped my classes that I analyzed later to identify their differences and compare the advantages and disadvantages of using the above-mentioned materials. Before that I took informal interviews of the class instructors at the beginning of the classes. Thus I have collected information and seen how they supported or disagreed with my hypotheses. I have also tried to explore what other areas the information point at that I might have overlooked. I have also asked the students to share their feelings and experiences of those specific classes with me. I have analyzed the data collected thus and tried to reach a reasonable outcome which, I hope, will be a reliable source for other researchers and lead to further research.

Chapter 4: Materials Development

(4.1) Planning

I will use two different texts collected from poetry and novels and incorporate them with suitable and relevant exercises such as identification of specific structures, writing similar stories, vocabulary building, etc. Instead of using the traditional way of teaching grammar rules and substantiating them with drill practices in isolated sentences, I will use the materials basically to contextualize the rules and emphasize the underlined rules at the same time.

(4.2) Materials: Development and Rationales

As the purpose of my research is to facilitate language learning through making the Western culture familiar to the students, basically by emphasizing the similarities between the cultures of the native and the target languages, I have chosen the texts very carefully so that they meet the above requirements. The title of the lesson is “Keeping cultural similarities at the centre: The SVO order, tense system (narrative tense) and informal or everyday English” (See Appendix B). The texts have been chosen from two different genres of English literature. I have divided the lesson into three sections. The first section is dedicated to teach speaking skill. Here I have used some pictures for brainstorming. The students were supposed to talk about culture in general and the elements of culture that constitute it. The second section deals with listening and reading skills. Here I have used the poem “London” by William Blake. The purpose behind choosing this particular text is that it reflects 19th century London in all her anarchy, but at the same time the problems depicted in the poem are applicable to the present day too. Again, the problems dealt in the poem were not only the problems of London but are equally applicable in the context of Bangladesh- in fact, the whole world. There is barely any country in the world that is not burdened with problems such as child labour, war, prostitution and others. I used this text in

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order to teach the students the subject-verb-object order and other alternatives of this usual order. I wanted to make the students aware of the fact that there are other alternative orders different from the usual SVO order of affirmative sentences such as OSV or SOV or VOS. I consider poetry to be the perfect place where we find the practical application of these alternative orders.

The third section deals with writing skill. The text used here is an excerpt from a recent novel *Grandpa Wouldn't Lie* by Samuel D. Perry. In this excerpt the grandpa narrates to his grandson how he met a witch and how one can separate them from regular women. A grandchild listening to fairy tales from his or her grandparents is a very common phenomenon in every culture throughout the world. Again, it shows the use of past simple tense very well. Here the students were supposed to notice how past simple tense was used to narrate an incident from the past. The language of the novel is a bit colloquial, so I used it also to make the students familiar with some informal everyday English. At the end the students were supposed to write five sentences in the past simple tense while narrating any of the fairy tales that they heard from their grandparents or read from any book of fairy tales when they were young.

Chapter 5: Data Collection

(5.1) Rationales Behind the Survey Questionnaire and the Questions

I used the survey questionnaire to collect some primary and general information about the students that were related to my research. It worked as a kind of scope for the students to prepare for what was waiting ahead. Thus it helped the students to get introduced to the upcoming lesson and also an idea about the topic of my research. It also helped them to be active participants in the class. I chose the questions very carefully so that they did not prove to be irrelevant and make the questionnaire clumsy. I avoided issues that might be culturally, politically and religiously sensitive. I also tried to maintain a balance between the questionnaire and the lesson. I kept different types of questions such as single select multiple choices, multiple select multiple choices, ranking, yes/no questions, open ended questions and so on in order to render variation to the questionnaire. Thus I made sure that the students do not feel it to be boring or monotonous. I started the questionnaire with attitude questions since the focus of my research is related to the attitudes of the learners towards the English culture and language.

(5.2) Conducting the Classes

The first and foremost point that I must mention here is that I had to conduct the classes in Bangla. I had to explain each and every questions and choices in Bangla for the sake of accuracy in the information that the students would provide. I also had to explain and interpret the tasks and exercises in the lesson and the questions of the test. I started the class with the survey questionnaire. It took almost half an hour for the students to complete the questionnaire as I had to explain each question to the students. Then I divided them into two groups. One of the groups attended a class with a teacher of the same institution who followed my direction. The teachers used *Applied English Grammar and Composition: Anglo-Bengali for High Schools* by P. C. Das

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to teach the first group the SVO order and the use of past simple tense. Then they gave the students a quiz test that took ten minutes and carried ten points.

The second group attended a class with me that took one hour and thirty minutes. We started the class with the speaking session. The reason why I started with this particular skill is that as I was completely a new face to the students, I intended to take it as an opportunity to get familiar with them. Because the lesson demanded a lot of participation from the students, I tried to use this session to help them overcome their primary hesitation. First of all, I asked the students to look at the pictures on the very first page of the lesson and come up with the terms or words that immediately came to their mind (within not more than 30 seconds). Then we talked about their existing knowledge about culture in general. They shared with me what they knew about culture and named some components that they thought could manifest the culture of a particular society. After that they tried to find out if there were any similarities between the words that they came up with in the brainstorming session and the components of culture. In the brainstorming session, the terms that the students came up with (such as child labour, war, family bonding/family relation, and witch/fairy tales, etc.) met my expectations. They recognized very well that the terms themselves were somehow related to the components of culture.

We started the second section with listening to the recitation of the poem “London”. I did not expect to have any audio device in the institutions, so I carried my own with me. The students listened to the record without looking at the poem in the lesson. Then I asked them if they could get the tone of the poem and what the poem was about. Surprisingly enough, many of them came up with the term ‘anarchy’ which was completely out of my expectation. However, I played the record second time while they followed the written version of the poem so that they could have a good grasp of the poem. After that we had a whole class discussion on the subject-matter of the

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poem. Then we tried to find out whether and how the socio-cultural features highlighted in the poem were coherent with those of Bangladesh. I helped the students notice that though the poem was written in 1794, the issues and problems dealt in the poem were universal and timeless. Once this was granted, I asked the students to find out how the features were similar to those in their own cultural setting. At the same time I was completely putting effort to sterilize the differences between Western and Bangladeshi culture that they were tending consciously or unconsciously in their mind.

At this stage according to my direction the students formed groups (4 in each) and found out the subjects, verbs and objects in each sentences in the poem. When they were done, I provided them feedback. They also found out the inverted sentences and noticed carefully the alternative orders there. Then we discussed the significances of the inverted sentences in the poem. I explained how the usual SVO order had been changed to rhyme with the previous line in the poem. I also explained how inverted sentences can render variation to their writing.

The third section was on writing skill. At this point I went back to the pictures on the first page of the lesson and talked about the picture of the witch. I asked them how they were familiar with a witch. Some replied that they had heard about witches in the fairy tales that they had heard from their elders when they had been young, while others told that they had read about witches in the books of fairy tales. I then asked them to read the excerpt in the writing section once and try to find out what the excerpt was about. When they were done, they told that it was about the signs that separated a witch from a normal woman which a grandfather was narrating to his grandson. I asked them if they were familiar with similar situations. They assured that most of them had similar experiences. Thus I made them notice that story-telling (grandparents telling stories to their grandchildren) is not exclusive to the Western culture, or there is nothing

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new in that tradition in their own culture. This in no way makes the Western culture different from their native culture. After that we had a quick review of the sentence-structure of the past simple tense. I then asked the students to read the excerpt for the second time and notice how the narrator used past simple tense to narrate the story about the witch. While doing so, they would also underline the verbs in past form. Then I asked them to write down five sentences in the given space narrating any stories they heard from their grandparents or read in a book of fairy tales as children. I continuously emphasized the word “narrate” and thus made sure that they wrote the sentences in past simple tense.

Our final task was to discuss about the phrases and expressions in bold letters in the excerpt. I told them to guess the meanings of these phrases, but nobody could tell a thing. So, I explained the meanings and usage of the phrases and expressions. For the sake of better explanation I gave example of some of the similar expressions that we find in Bangla. Thus I emphasized again that there are many other similar features between the cultures, as well as the languages, of the Western countries and Bangladesh.

Before giving the test I summed up the whole lecture and reinforced the similarities. I also tried to show that the differences that the native and target cultures had were basically because of their geographical settings. I made them aware of the fact that features that are normal in the native sociocultural setting may seem peculiar to the target sociocultural setting and vice-versa. At the end of the class I gave them a quiz test. It took less than ten minutes. When the test was over I asked them to comment on the class and the lesson. Till then I did not know how they performed in the class-works and test, but all of them assured me that they liked the class very much. It felt very alive, and there were lots of fun throughout the class. They invited me further to give similar lectures sometimes if I could manage. Some went to the extent of expecting that I

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would conduct similar classes with them on a regular basis. They thanked me, and I too expressed my gratefulness to them for helping me conduct my research and took their leave.

Chapter 6: Data Analyses

(6.1) Presentation and Analyses of the Collected Data

The data collected through the survey questionnaire and finally the results of the quiz tests given at the end of the classes have helped me further to justify my hypothesis. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been applied for the presentation and analysis of the collected data. Following are the charts of the data that are very closely relevant to the research. Here ‘SD’ stands for ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘D’ for ‘Disagree’, ‘N’ for ‘Not Sure’, ‘A’ for ‘Agree’ and ‘SA’ for ‘Strongly Agree’.

Chart-1 shows the opinions of the students in each situation about the ways English language is taught in the class. Among 96 students of Shahid Zia Degree College, 54 students agreed and 22 students strongly agreed that “the way English is taught in the class should be changed”. In Joypurhat Women’s College, 31 students agreed and 10 students strongly agreed among a total of 43 while 26 students agreed and 11 students strongly agreed among 48 students of Hakimpur Women’s College on the same issue. In total, 111 students agreed and 43 students strongly agreed among 187 students (Chart-2) that “the ways English is taught in the class should be changed”. It implies that the ground is set and most of the students are ready to accept changes. The question arises now what the specific point where the turn may take place is. This has also been decided by the students themselves that is apparent from the next chart.

Question- The ways English is taught in the class should be changed:

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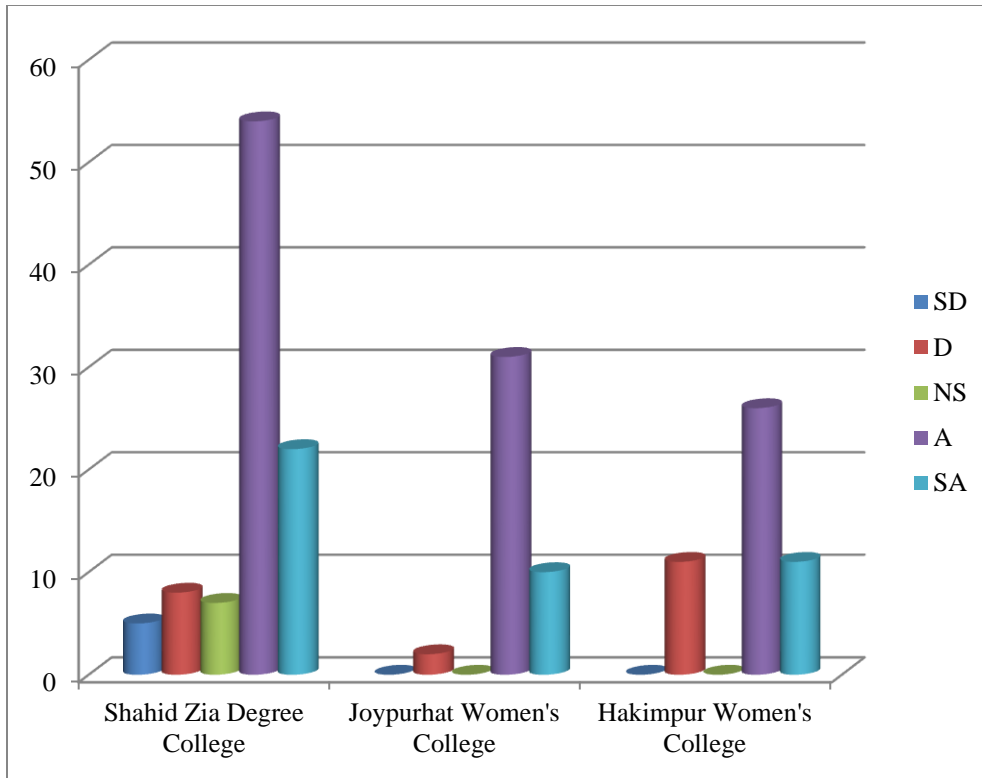


Chart-1: Opinion on the ways English is taught in the class

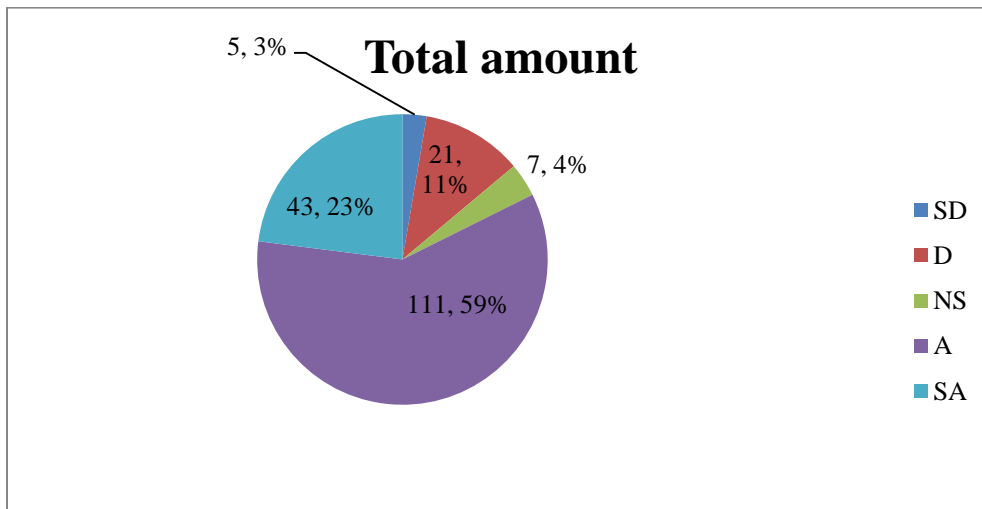


Chart-2: Amount in total and percentages for Chart-1

The following chart (Chart-3) displays the opinions of the students about the changes that should/can be brought in the English language classes.

Question: Suggested changes: Comparison between “New course books should be introduced” and “The teachers should come up with new ideas and incorporate them into the textbooks to teach English”-

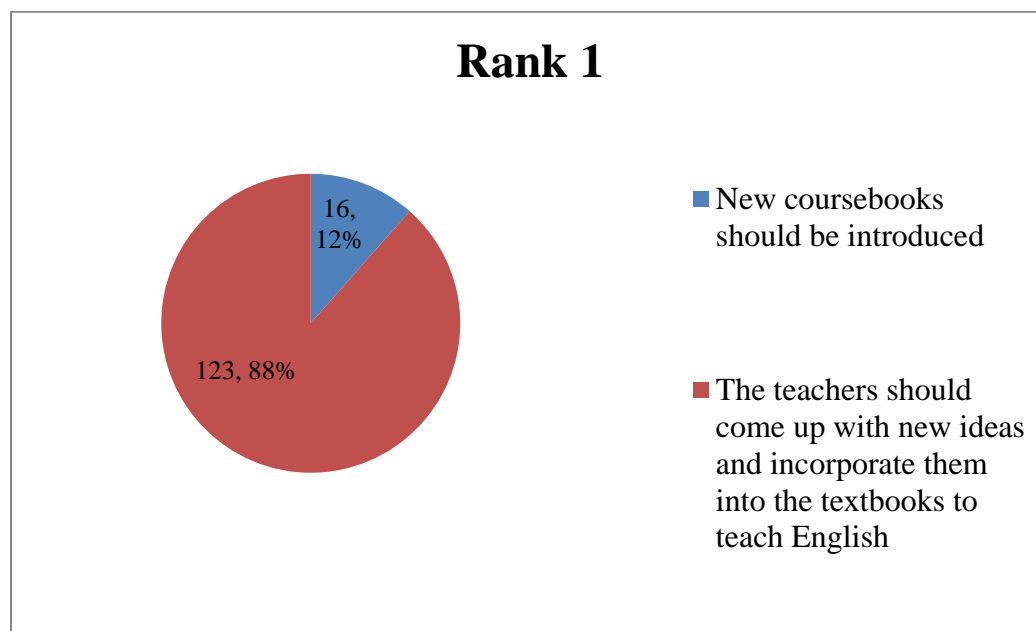


Chart-3: Comparison in ranking

Among 187 students, only 16 students thought that “new course books of English language should be introduced” while 123 students spontaneously agreed that “the teachers should come up with new ideas and incorporate them into the textbooks to teach English”. The percentage indicates that it is the teacher who should take the initiatives instead of waiting for the government in the rescue mission. The percentage also indicates that the students expect a lot from the part of the teachers, and they will welcome any positive and helpful initiatives taken by the teachers. So, the iron is hot now. It is quite a positive environment and the right time for the teachers to act as the mind-sets of the students are already on their side. Besides, people who are involved in curriculum and material designing do that on general assumptions where specials become ordinary. That is to say that specific and individual problems of a student is merged or

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dissolve into some general and common problems of the students of the whole country. Thus individuals are left neglected. It is the teacher who can come forward to avoid the situation as they know and understand their students better than anyone- sometimes, even better than the parents and guardians of the students. If they design each lesson according to the needs of their classes and incorporate them into the existing textbooks and other materials provided by the education board, they will be able to make the ordinaries special. For example, after conducting the survey, I can predict now a lot about the students who took part in the survey. So, I will be able to prepare materials that will suit the needs and proficiency of these particular students. Similarly, teachers can also do the same with their students. If every teacher takes this step, the situation will surely improve by near future.

Question: Materials projecting Western culture seem more difficult to handle than those projecting native culture-

Materials projecting Western culture seem more difficult to handle than those projecting native culture

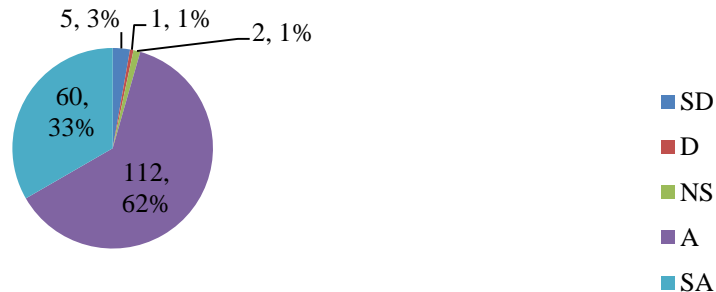


Chart-4: Opinion regarding materials

The above chart (Chart-4) displays the students' opinion regarding the difficulties of handling materials projecting Western and the native culture. 60 students strongly agreed and 112 students agreed to the fact that it is quite difficult to deal with the topics that project the Western culture. In addition to the fact that the Western culture is simply not their culture, or it is not native to them, there must be some other reasons we need to concentrate on. One possible reason is that they are not sufficiently familiar with the Western culture. Most of them are unaware of the fact that there are lots of similarities between the Western and native cultures. Once they are made aware, the scene will change very soon. The next figure shows that there are sufficient logics to consolidate my claim.

Question: More familiarity with the Western culture can be helpful and facilitate learning the English language-

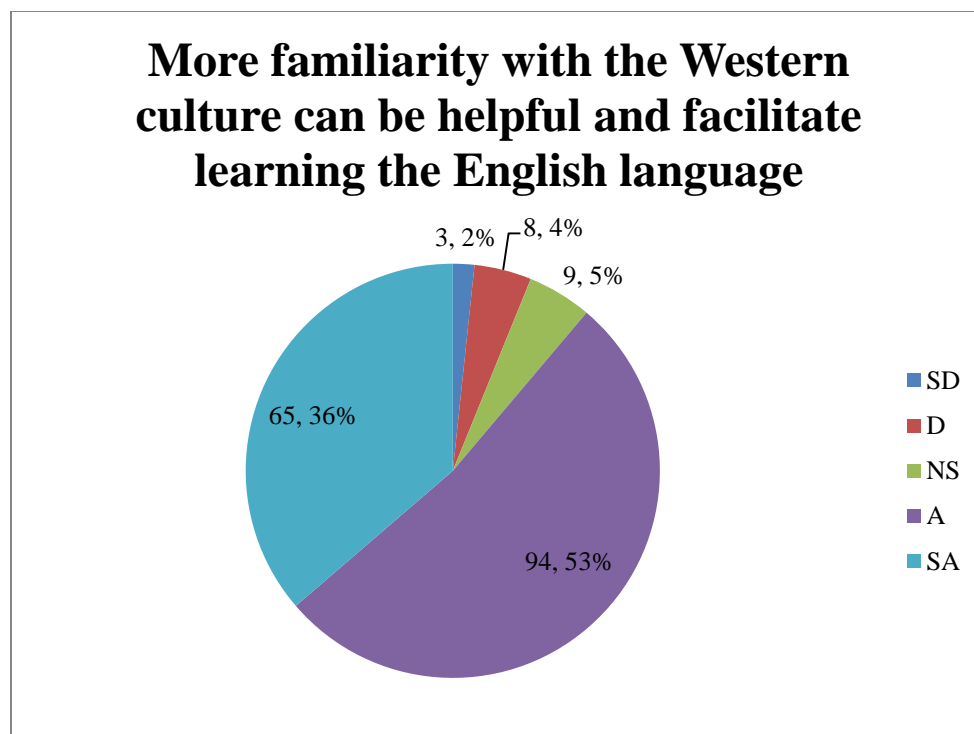


Chart-5: Opinion regarding the ways of learning the English language

The above chart (Chart-5) shows that 36% students strongly agree and 53% students agree that more familiarity with the Western culture can be helpful and facilitate the learning of the English language. The next chart (Chart-6) makes my claim even more solid. The numbers displayed in it shows that 31% students strongly agree and 56% of them agree that materials with features of Western culture that are similar to those of the native culture are easy to handle.

Question: Materials with features of Western culture that are similar to those of the native culture are easy to handle-

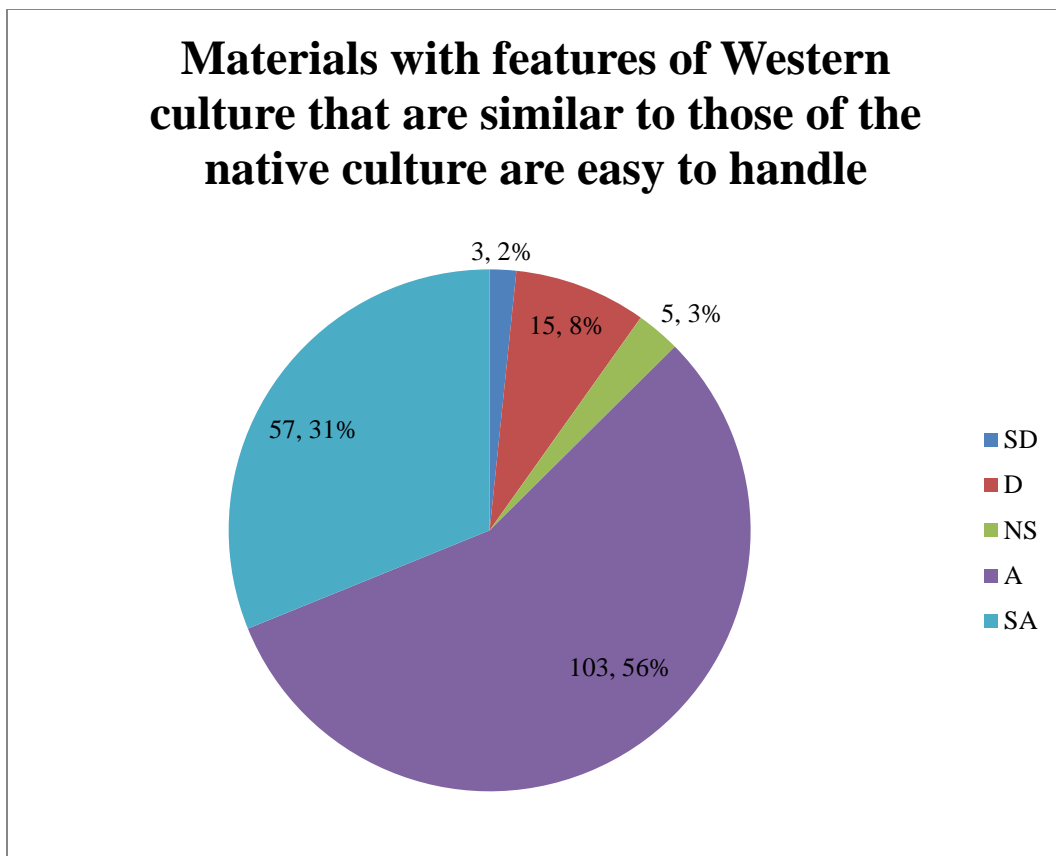


Chart-6: Opinion on the difficulties of English language learning

In answer to the question how they can get more familiar with Western culture, 109 students out of 187 chose the literature option which is almost 60% (59.24%) of the total. They think that Western novels, poetry, essays and dramas can help them get more familiar with the Western culture as they are the product of the culture itself. Again, 161 students (87.5%) think that watching TV is the most practical and feasible way to get more familiar with the Western culture. But the irony here is that only 45 students (23.37%) watch Western channels such as HBO, ZStudio, Fox Movies, Fox Travels, CNN, BBC, Star Movies and others on a regular basis. The rest of them are glued to either West Bengal or Hindi channels which in no way is going to help them provide sufficient information about the Western culture. On the other hand, only 45 students' last read items were from English literature which is 24.46% of the total. It indicates

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that they have a very little habit of reading English literature outside their syllabus. The habit of watching TV is something that the students themselves are responsible for, but reading English literature is something that the teachers can control. They can guide and control this habit of the students so that their reading can help them learning the English language. This is the scope that they can very cleverly exploit.

Now comes the inevitable question- Do you hold any kind of negative attitude towards the Western culture (Chart-7)? 41% students answered “Yes”, 30% students answered “No” while 29% students thought they were not sure about it. Students who answered “Yes” informed that their negative attitude towards the Western culture set barriers to learning the English language. On the other hand, students who went for the “No” option informed that their not having any negative attitude towards the Western culture helped them a lot in learning the language.

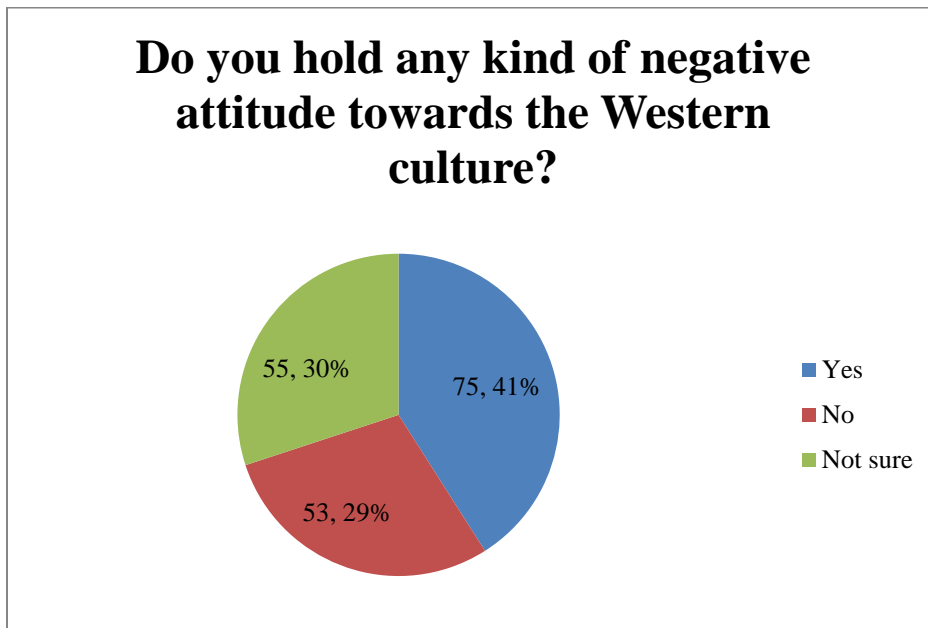


Chart-7: Attitude towards the Western culture

Finally, let us have a look at the data of the grades the students acquired in the quiz tests (Chart-8 and 9).

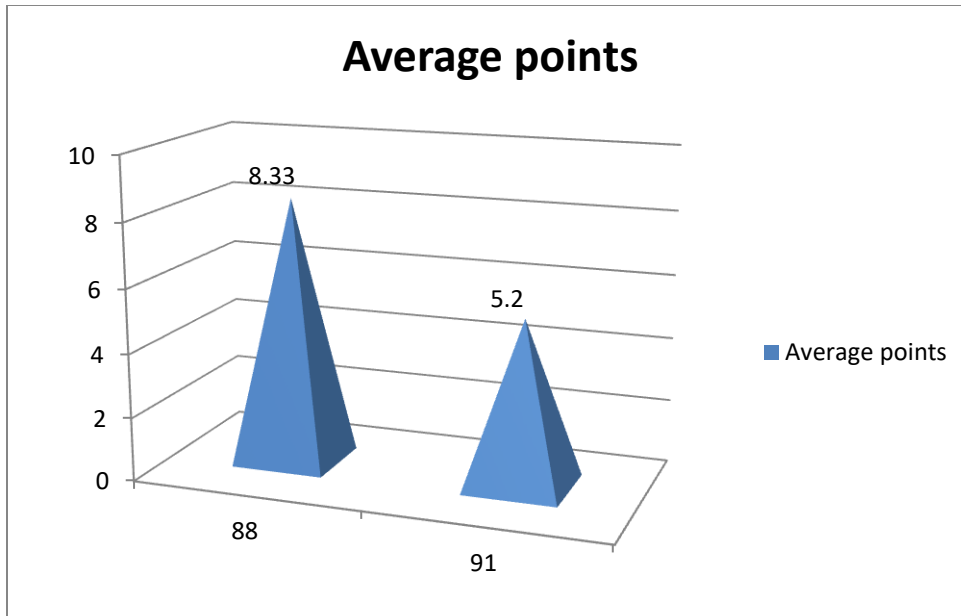


Chart-8: Average grades

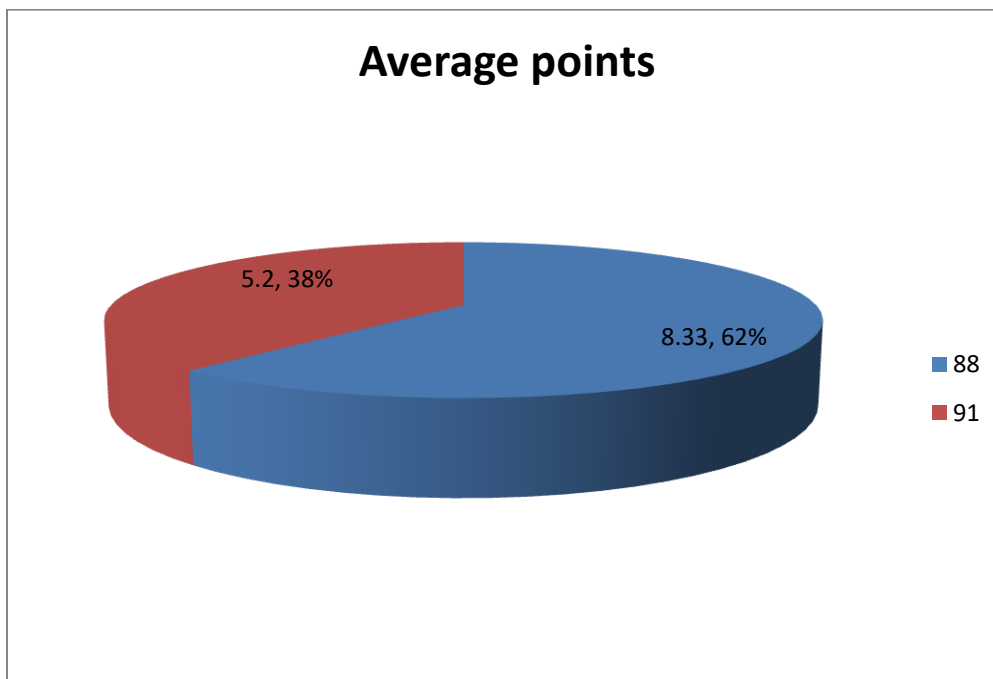


Chart-9: Percentages of the average grades

Students who were taught by using the traditional course materials got 5.2 out of 10 on an average. On the other hand, students whom I taught myself by using my own materials got 8.33

on an average. This is also worth mentioning that 5 students in my group got 10 out of 10, and nobody got 0 while none of the other group got full marks, and 5 of them got 0. The difference in the two average grades is not very big. Still, if the limitations that I faced while conducting the research can be overcome, it will definitely bring greater success, I believe.

(6.2) Scrutinizing the Teachers' Viewpoints

While briefing the teachers about how to conduct the classes, I had a very informal discussion with them about the present status of English language teaching and learning in their colleges. They also agreed that the textbooks and materials provided by the Education Board are not sufficient and appropriate for their students. One reason they mentioned is that there are empirical differences between the students of urban and rural areas. Again, the proficiency level of the students in the same class is not the same. The curriculum designers do not seem to keep it in their mind, and the textbooks are the result of gross generalization. However, they admitted that it is very impractical to expect that the curriculum designers will design different textbooks and materials according to the needs of each student. They also admitted that it is their responsibility to appropriate the available materials according to the needs of each student which they are not doing presently. They wholeheartedly welcomed the idea of using literary items as materials because similar to the students, the traditional materials feel boring and monotonous to the teachers equally. Using literary items to highlight the Western cultural traits and their similarities with those of the native culture and thus facilitate English language learning at the same time is completely a new approach to them. They felt very interested in this new approach and thought that it would receive sufficient response from the students. They felt that literature demands a great deal of attachment and involvement from the part of both the groups. They agreed that waiting for the government to take the initiatives is like waiting for godot that will

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never show up. They informed that the practice of giving tuition is so much in those areas that the students have become completely dependent on it. Neither the teachers nor the students feel the need of conducting and attending regular classes in the colleges. The picture is the same in all the colleges in those areas. The most important thing that the teachers realized is that instead of pointing the finger at the government they should utilize whatever they have. They have the textbooks, the materials, and above all and the most valuable, their own skill and intelligence. They know that they are not investing their best, but better late than never. They know what they have. It is just a matter of epiphany. Once they reach it the scenario will be different.

(6.3) Findings

From the above data analysis and other observations, I have reached the following results:

1. Most of the students are not happy with the present ways of teaching the English language. They feel that it should be changed.
2. The students feel that the responsibility of changing the ways of teaching English in the class lies on the teachers mostly. Changing the traditional course books is not as important as improvising the existing materials with the innovations of the teachers.
3. Only the teachers have the knowledge about each student's strengths and weaknesses. So, he is the right person to take all the necessary initiatives.
4. The students are ready to accept creative changes in the materials if it is done by their teachers.
5. The students feel that materials that deal with Western cultural aspects are more difficult to handle than those projecting native culture.

6. Unfamiliarity with or lacking knowledge about the Western culture is one of the reasons why the students find it difficult to handle the lessons that deal with Western cultural aspects.
7. They feel that once they get more familiar with the Western culture, English language learning will be easier.
8. There are lots of similarities between the Western and native cultures. If the students are made aware of these similarities, the difficulty level of English language learning will lessen to a great extent.
9. Reading Western literature combined with a controlled and guided watching of the Western channels on the TV will be really helpful to make the students familiar with the Western culture.
10. Students who possess positive attitude towards the Western culture have sensed some privileges in learning English.
11. Students who possess negative attitude towards the Western culture have been hindered by this attitude in learning English.
12. Getting familiar with the Western culture can minimize cultural differences as there are lots of similarities between the Western and the native culture which can eventually facilitate the English language learning.
13. Using Western literature as materials is the most effective way to acquire necessary knowledge about the Western culture and thus minimize cultural differences.

(6.4) Applications of the Findings

Since the study is on a small scale, the results can very well be applied on a small scale. Both the teachers and the students who took part in this study will be greatly benefitted by its findings.

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Besides, they may very well be experimented with other students in other institutions too. The teachers who cooperated with me in my study earnestly requested to share my findings with them. They expressed their interest to utilize the findings if they yielded positive results. I have left my lesson plans and materials with them so that they can use them as samples and modify and improvise them further according to the needs of the students. For example, they have to select the particular grammatical item that they are supposed to teach. Then they have to find out a suitable text (any item of English literature) to teach that particular grammatical item. They have to devise some activities too to accompany the selected texts. The length of the texts and the activities should not take more than 60 minutes. So, they may divide the lesson into 4 parts- 15 minutes for each. They may apply different types of tasks, such as group tasks, individual tasks, or whole-class tasks according to the demands of the lessons and the suitability with the class size.

While selecting the texts, the teachers must keep in mind that it must carry some information about the Western culture that is similar to the characteristics of the native culture. The teachers must highlight the similarities so that the Western cultural aspects do not get alienated by the students. The first and foremost task of the teachers is to eliminate the negative attitudes of the students towards the Western culture. The accompanying activities should also set the students to think about how the two cultures are similar. If there is any dissimilarity, the teachers have to reason it by showing the logic behind it. For instance, while conducting the class, I asked the students who possess negative attitude towards the Western culture about the particular aspect that they do not like about that culture. Some replied that they do not like the dress that the Western women wear (such as miniskirts, shirts, pants, etc.); some replied that they do not like Western people because they take alcohol. I reasoned that Western people are very hard-

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working. Almost all the women there work outside. Naturally they wear dresses that are comfortable and suitable for their job. They are always in a rush. So, they have to wear short dresses since they may get entangled in long dresses. Similarly, I also explained that it is very cold in Western countries. Heating the body only from outside is not enough. That is why they take alcohol in order to keep the body warm from inside. Thus, I convinced them that all the cultural differences are due to the differences in geographical locations and religions to a great extent.

The teachers have to keep it in mind that whatever the text is, it has to be thought-provoking and must keep the students engaged in the lesson. There might be some grammatical items that may not be suitable for any text with cultural emphasis. Sometimes the students may not like this new approach. The teachers should devise some other ways in this situation. For example, instead of breaking the news that they are going to do something new, they can start with reciting a poem; or, they can start with a story and leave it incomplete and then ask the students to guess what might happen next. The warm-up exercises should do the job of making the students interested in the rest of the lesson. So, the teachers have to choose the warm-up exercise very carefully. They should also keep it in mind that the warm-up exercise be coherent with the rest of the lesson.

Since watching TV seems easier and more comfortable to the students, the teachers may suggest some programs related to the next lesson. They may also provide some related text from English literature that the students will read at home. The warm-up lesson in the next class might start with that very TV program or text. During the activities, the teachers may find that some of them are suitable for group work while they actually planned it to do by pair work. In such a

situation, they should change the type of the activity then and there. They have to deal with it with prudence and skill.

The results of this research may also be used for training the teachers. Attempts have been made to incorporate literature into MA in TESOL program by Gordon, Zaleski and Goodman on the ground that “the cultural backgrounds of the would-be teachers will not match those of most of their future students; the course therefore aims to broaden their views on other cultures by provoking reflection, evoking feeling, and stimulating action” (as cited in Sadeghi, 2007, p. 148). Patrick Rosenkjar emphasizes that the would-be teachers in TESOL program should be trained to “choose appropriate texts, analyse them stylistically, and use relevant task-based follow-up activities” (as cited in Sadeghi, 2007, p. 149).

Above all, the aim of this research is to foster positive attitude towards the Western culture by highlighting the similarities between the Western and native culture without being obsessed by the former. Islam (2011) warns that “we must accept the benefits it might offer us, but should not allow it to shape our cultural expressions” (para. 1). Proper selection of the texts and their controlled use are likely to yield the best results in this matter.

Above are some suggestions how the teachers may utilize the findings of this research. They may stick to these suggestions, or devise their own ways to improvise them to get better results. They may always stray from these suggestions according to the needs of their students.

(6.5) Approaching the Research Questions

As the study started with some research questions, it is supposed to answer them at the end. Below I have tried to approach the research questions in the light of both theoretical and practical studies:

Q. 1. In what ways can the implementation of materials taken from literary texts facilitate language teaching and learning?

- The practice of using literature in teaching EFL is not new. Many researchers have found different benefits of using literature in EFL classrooms. In place of the mechanic and lifeless materials, literary items can bring forth diversity into the class and make it alive. It can keep the students engaged and involved into the lesson. It can eliminate boredom and make the learning entertaining and interesting. Referring to Baird, Turker (1991) maintains that “literary texts can be used in language teaching, because the language used in a literary text is suitable for the contexts of the events” (as cited in Turker 1991, p. 300). He summarizes the usage of literary texts in EFL teaching and learning as follows-

- I. Literary texts will help not only to improve reading but listening, speaking and writing skills as well.
- II. It is possible to understand and get general information related with experiences and events in real life by using and analyzing literary texts.
- III. Literary texts will help to realize the individual and societal developments. They make the readers to improve themselves culturally and educationally in accordance with their emotional features. They also remove mother tongue interferences.
- IV. Literary texts make the students acquire analyzing and criticizing skills (p. 304).

In addition to the above usage, “containing real examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary items, the literary texts raise learners’ awareness of the range of the target language and advance their competence in all language skills” (Povey, 1967, as cited in Pardede, 2010, para. 2).

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Llach (2007) identifies three reasons why we should use literature in language teaching. He observes that “literature provides the learner with genuine, authentic samples of language, and also with real samples of a wide range of styles, text types and registers. It is extremely important for foreign language learners to be trained in a variety of registers, styles and genres and be able to discern the function of each of them” (p. 9). His second argument is borrowed from Widdowson (1983) who observes that a literary text has multiple interpretations, these generate different opinions among the learners and this leads to real, motivated interaction with the text, with the fellow students and with the teacher (as cited in Llach, 2007, p. 9). The final argument is grounded on a motivational criterion which ascertains that “the literary text shows the real feelings of the writer and this generates a powerful motivation in the learner” (p. 10). Finally, one of the most crucial advantages of using literature and the most applicable to my research is that “struggling with the potential cultural problem of literature worked to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student” (Marshall, 1979, as cited in Mirzaei and Domakani, 2010, p. 61).

On a different occasion, I referred to the British Marxist critic Catherine Wallace (2003) who complained against CLT saying that the goal of CLT is communication and only communication in natural setting. The sole concentration of the most ELT coursebooks is on acquiring communicative competence, especially on oral language development. It neglects the learners’ ability to explore ideas and form argumentative speech- “language teaching procedures are increasing the learners’ second language competence in terms of fluency and accuracy; but it is not developing their power of critical thinking” (as cited in Khatun, 2010, p. 168). Using literary items in place of the ELT coursebooks would suffice and set CLT from this allegation free

because it is literature that has the potential to help develop the learners' power of critical thinking and make them competent users of the language at the same time.

Q. 2. What kind of cultural contents can the literature of the target language import to a different language setting?

- Pardede (2010) refers to three benefits of using literature in language teaching. The second and third benefits he mentions is that-

...using literature in language teaching has the advantage of providing cultural information about the target language. "Literary texts increase foreign language learners' insight into the country and the people whose language is being learnt" (Collie and Slater, 1991), which fosters learners' ability to interpret discourse in different social and cultural target language contexts (Savvidou, 2004). Finally, since literature enables students to understand and appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own, it encourages personal growth and intellectual development (Carter and Long, 1991, 2-4) (as cited in Pardede, 2010, para 2 & 3).

The literature of the target language can import a great deal of cultural content in a different language setting. It has been said earlier that the literature of a community is the product of its cultural experiences because the authors themselves are the product of that culture. Their beliefs and views will be predominant in whatever they produce. Thus the literature of a community carries the components that constitute its culture. For example, the texts that I used as the texts in my lesson deal with matters that are markers of the Western culture, but at the same time similar to the markers of the native culture. Aspects such as, child labour, anarchy, war, prostitution and other socio-cultural issues, and also family-bonding, beliefs in witches and fairies, and practice

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of telling stories to the grandchildren, represent the pictures of the Western societies. These issues can be applied to the native socio-cultural traits as well. Until the classes were administered, the students were completely unaware of the fact that there can be any similar features between the two cultures.

Above all, I did not use the traditional or non-literary materials because they pose a problem before the learners and set them to find out the solution. I used literature to function it the other way round. Since literature do not display the grammar rules on its surface, the learners travelled to the problem from the solution. They knew the solutions beforehand, so that the problems did not pose any potential threat to them.

Q. 3. Do a better access to and understanding of the target culture really facilitate learning an SL/FL?

- The answer to this question lies into the answer to the question no. 2 to a great extent.

“...culture and language are in reality ‘married’ (Crawford-Lange and Lange, 1984, as cited in Cresswell, 2008, p. 1). A better understanding of and appreciating the target-language culture help eliminate the sense of “otherness”. It brings some definite changes in the learners’ attitude towards a language that is not their own. It encourages personal growth and intellectual development as has been mentioned earlier. Proper knowledge and insight into the culture of the users of the target language also help understand the meaning and use of words of that language.

Pratt (1991) talks of a ‘contact zone’- a void where learners of different cultural background meet safely without any clash. She has also named it ‘safe house’ because the feelings and experiences are homogenous at this space (p. 40). According to Bizzel (1994), this contact zone has the advantage of providing a rationale for integrating English studies multiculturally (p. 167).

This ‘contact zone’ emerges when two or more different cultures meet or encounter. This

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encounter is supposed to occur in every ESL/EFL classroom. Unless the homogeneity of the target and native cultures are emphasized, there will be no contact zone. The absence of the contact zone is likely to restrain the learning of the target language. While administering the classes, I recurrently emphasized the similarities of the Western and native culture so that the students did not feel alienated and sensed the safety within the contact zone.

Q. 4. Is it possible to teach the different grammatical features and functions of language through literature?

- It is beyond question that literature can be used to teach the different grammatical features and functions of a language. Literature is the sum total of the different grammatical features and the functions of a language. Language is the inevitable tool to produce literature. It displays the practical use of the theoretical grammar and lexicon because lexicon and grammar are the essential part of a comprehension. For instance, dramas exemplify the use of practical conversation that come alive through the dialogues of the characters; short stories and novels pinpoint the use of language coloured by the author's imagination camouflaging the underlined grammatical features; poetry displays grammar beyond its traditional usage. Thus literature can teach the learners grammar beyond its theories. In other words, it integrates the traditional grammar and the extralinguistic features of language. Naturally, it provides the learners the fun of learning a language. Llach (2007) considers literature reading as a communicative activity and literary texts as authentic examples of language use. Referring to Brumfit and Carter (1986) and Lazar (1993), he expresses his consensus that there is no specific literary language and the language used in literary texts is common language with a high concentration of linguistic features like metaphors, similes, poetic lexis, unusual syntactic patterns, etc. (p. 9).

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The principle function of a language is meaningful communication. There are different modes of communication such as giving instruction, requesting, ordering, and expressing feelings and attitudes and so on. These are also the functions of a language. It is literature that provides the best examples of all these functions applied. Nothing can project the expressions of emotions, feelings and attitudes better than poetry. Similarly, the other items of literature too illustrate the other functions of language. In the texts that I chose as the materials, I highlighted the different language registers. For example, I pointed out how “a body” can be used in place of “a person”.

Q.5. What are the possible handicaps in using literature in language learning and how can they be overcome?

- Khatib and Rahimi (2012) refer to McKay (1982) who highlights some limitations of using literature in language teaching. Firstly, literature lacks the contribution to the teaching of grammar. Secondly, literature does not help students reach their occupational and academic goals. The third argument is that literature reflects specific cultural viewpoints (p. 33). All these observations have little ground. First of all, literature is the combination of the grammatical features of a language. It is more rational to teach the underlined grammatical rules and structures apparent in the literary texts than the bare grammatical rules in the commercial materials. Secondly, literature is more helpful to teach the four skills- reading, writing, speaking and listening- that are the main pillars of academic goals. Finally, I suggest using literature in order to identify and study the specific cultural viewpoints which, I believe, can set privilege to language learning. Many researchers claim that literature projects subtle vocabulary usage and complex and unusual structures. This should be actually considered as an advantage in that it gives extensive knowledge about the language being used in real setting. I personally did not

face those limitations since I made these very disadvantages my capital. My research results suggest that I was not very wrong in doing so.

Q. 6. How may the language teachers, as well as the learners respond to this attitude- teaching and learning language through literature while highlighting cultural similarities?

- The teachers' attitude towards the Western culture is as important as that of the students. It has some practical influence in classroom interaction. Having positive attitude towards the Western culture is likely to help the teachers convince their students about the advantages of their attitude. If they themselves are not convinced that familiarity with the target-language culture can facilitate the learning of that language, they will never be able to motivate their students. While scrutinizing the cross-cultural tensions in Western writing pedagogy, Clachar (2000) discovered mixed reactions from the Turkish teachers who took part in the study. They displayed both oppositional and accommodative attitudes towards Western pedagogy of writing that has crucial role in classroom interaction. He grounded his research on the discussion he overheard which revealed that "...there is no such notion as culturally-neutral language pedagogy. EFL writing approaches involve cultural biases and do impart attitudes related to Western culture and indirectly to the EFL learner's native culture" (p. 67). He met teachers who, on the one hand, hold a protective attitude against Western style of writing and pay a great deal of attention to grammatical accuracy as a "way to help students detach themselves from the imposition of Western discourse and to allow them to preserve cultural integrity" p.(76-77). They perceived the control of Western writing style over the Turkish one as the control of power through control of communication. On the other hand, he also met teachers who had a consensus where they took the stance that Western rhetorical style (which emphasize on criticizing and argumentation) is a source of enrichment. They saw it as additional knowledge (p. 79). In fact, denial to the style is

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a kind of denial to the critical ability of the students. So, the teacher's attitude is very important on the issue. The three teachers who took part in my study seemed very enthusiastic and interested in using literature in the language classroom. When I made it clear that my intention is to make Western culture familiar through Western literature, they seemed even more interested in the act. I have mentioned earlier that they asked me to share my findings and helped me wholeheartedly throughout my study with real enthusiasm. So, I assume that while using my guidelines practically, they will be controlled by the same notion as mine.

(6.6) Limitations

Because of the political restlessness, I had to face a number of strikes that made it quite difficult for me to arrange for the required classes. Moreover, as the H.S.C. examination was at hand, there were rarely any students from second year. Besides, since the colleges are in remote rural areas, most of the students are very weak in English. So, I had to explain and interpret each and every question in the survey questionnaire in Bangla. It took almost half an hour to complete the survey. Similarly, I had to explain the lessons, activities, and the question in the quiz test in Bangla as well. That is why I could not stick to the allotted time as mentioned in the lesson plan. It took almost one and a half hours to complete the lesson. Naturally, the students were getting restless by the end of the class. The materials and the approach were also new to them. They felt a little bit uncomfortable at the beginning; gradually, they got involved into the lesson though. I knew that there would be no audio devices available at the institutions, so I carried my own always with me. Still that did not work sometimes because of power failure. I had to read out the listening text loud to them. There was large number of students in each class. So it was not always possible to conduct group work since monitoring the activities of each group would have been difficult and consumed more time. Generally they get 50 minutes-1hour long classes. In

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order to produce better results I took 1 hour and 30 minutes long classes. I combined two lessons together as it was really very difficult to arrange more than one class in each institution.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

(7.1) Clues to Further the Research

I have mentioned some of the limitations that I faced during the research. The teachers may use these limitations as predictions and stay prepared to handle those barriers. The texts that I have used had no separate exercises with them. I think some amount of separate exercises would make the lesson better. More details can be added to the lesson plan. It can be organized more extensively. As the research has produced positive results, other researchers, preferably the teachers can further it in different ways. They may take comparative study between Western and Bangla literature as the basis of their lesson. For example, they may select the excerpts from Shakespeare's *King Lear* and DijendraLal Roy's *Shahjahan* side by side. If they do not find any Bangla text equivalent to the English one, they may themselves translate the selected part in Bangla and use it as a material in their lesson. Unlike in my lesson, they may also make the listening part stronger if need be.

(7.2) Towards a New Beginning

From the beginning of second or foreign language teaching and learning, efforts have been put to devise ways how these tasks can be facilitated. Using literature of the target language in the teaching of that language is one of the ways that has gone through huge modification throughout the last thirty years. Different researchers have looked at it from different angles. The present study explores how literary items of the target language can be used as materials for teaching the language keeping culture at the centre. It tries to discover the similarities between the target language culture and the native culture and thus help the learners develop a tolerant and positive attitude towards the Western culture on the hypothesis that it will eventually

facilitate EFL learning. It takes the rural Bangladeshi students of H.S.C. level as the subjects since this group of students are the most deprived ones of any such studies.

No language can be taught without some reference to its culture because language and culture are intricately interwoven. Keeping the culture of the target language opaque to the learners may enhance their sense of otherness which is very harmful to learning the language. On the contrary, making the target language culture familiar can help the students appreciate the different ways of looking at the world which can help them grow sensible to the culture. This will ultimately help the students learning the language in a tense-free atmosphere.

I have considered Western literature as the best way to be familiar with its culture on the ground that literature is the sum total of a language that reflects its culture. It is the literature of a community that acts as a vehicle to import its culture in a different cultural setting. It also bridges the gap between the two cultures and makes the learners familiar with the behavior of the people of the target language. It helps the learners grow more tolerant and sensible to the differences between the target and native cultures. Literature can also expose the learners to the authentic use of the target language. The learners can also be exposed to the various structure and functions of language through literature. It can stimulate their motivation and keep them emotionally engaged in the learning process. Above all, it is the easiest way to get access to the target-language culture.

The study has produced positive results. Students who attended the culture-oriented lectures acquired better grades than those who attended classes with traditional materials. Some other findings have also been reached at through the study. Suggestions have also been offered on how the findings can be applied and how to further this research.

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At the end, the above perspectives of using literature in the language classroom will produce best results if the teachers too, along with the students, possess a positive and tolerant attitudes towards the target-language culture. The success also depends to a great extent on the proper selection of the texts. The texts should carry a great deal of cultural content in them, and at the same time they have to project ideal and authentic specimen of the different use of the language. Only then the limitations faced throughout this study can be overcome that will ultimately take us to better results. In conclusion, literature can make the culture of the target language familiar to the learners and thus facilitate learning an SL/FL.

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Appendices

Appendix-A

Survey Questionnaire

A. Personal Information:

Name:

Level: HSC

Year:

B. Attitude Question:

I. Grammar classes are very interesting and enjoyable

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree/ neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

II. The ways English is taught in the class are OK

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

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III. The ways English is taught in the class should be changed

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

IV. From 1-5, please rank the most important changes that should be brought in the ways of teaching English in the class

- New course-books should be introduced
- The materials should be changed
- Exercises that don't match with the native culture should be left out
- Materials related to Western culture should be replaced by those related to native culture
- The teachers should come up with new ideas and incorporate them into the textbooks to teach English

V. Please tell us your proficiency level in the following tasks when you started at the Intermediate level:

Question Matrix/Table

The Four Skills	1=Poor	2=Fair	3=Good	4=Excellent	5=Not sure/not applicable
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					

VI. Please tell us your present proficiency level in the following tasks after you have been taught in this institution:

Question Matrix/Table

The Four Skills	1=Poor	2=Fair	3=Good	4=Excellent	5=Not sure/not applicable
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					

VII. Materials projecting Western culture seem more difficult to handle than those projecting native culture

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

VIII. More familiarity with the Western culture can be helpful and facilitate learning the English language

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

IX. Materials with features of the Western culture that are similar to those of native culture are easy to handle

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

X. How can you get more familiar with Western culture? (Multi-select multiple choice)

1. By travelling to the Western countries and stay there for a considerable period
2. By watching TV
3. By reading about it on the internet
4. By reading about it in books and magazines
5. By reading Western novels, poetry, essays, etc.
6. By listening to Western music

XI. Which of the following ways is the most interesting and effective to get more familiar with the Western culture? (Single-select multiple choice)

1. travelling to the Western countries and stay there for a considerable period
2. watching TV
3. reading about it on the internet
4. reading about it in books and magazines
5. reading Western novels, poetry, essays, etc.
6. listening to Western music

Why? _____

XII. Which of the following ways is the most practical and feasible to get more familiar with the Western culture? (Single-select multiple choice)

1. travelling to the Western countries and stay there for a considerable period
2. watching TV
3. reading about it on the internet
4. reading about it in books and magazines
5. reading Western novels, poetry, essays, etc.
6. listening to Western music

Why? _____

C. General Information related to attitude information:

XIII. How long do you watch TV every day? _____

XIV. Which channels do you watch the most?

1. Bangladeshi channels
2. West Bengal channels
3. Hindi channels
4. Western channels [BBC, CNN, Star Movies, HBO, Z Studio, Fox Movies, Fox Travels, etc.]

XV. When was the last time you read a book in English outside your syllabus?

_____ ago.

What was the book about? _____.

Give some other details of the book:

XVI. Do you hold any kind of negative attitudes or hostility towards Western culture?

Yes

No

Not sure

Yes, because:

No, because:

XVII. If yes, has your attitude ever hindered your learning of the English language?

Yes

No

Not sure

XVIII. If no, has your attitude ever facilitated your learning of the English language?

Yes

No

Not sure

Appendix-B

Lesson plan with materials:

Keeping cultural similarities at the centre: The SVO order, tense system (narrative tense) and informal or everyday English (Teachers' copy)

Introduction to the lesson:

The materials have been collected from two different genres of English literature. The first one is a poem, while the other is an excerpt from a recent novel. The purpose of choosing these particular materials is that they highlight some western socio-cultural pictures that are very similar to those in Bangladesh. The poem reflects the contemporary picture of London in all her anarchy, while the novel excerpt uplifts the relation between a grandparent and grandson and a reminiscence of the fairy tales that the grandson heard from his grandfather. The teacher should clarify how the subject-matters of the materials are coherent in the context of Bangladesh. Thus they are supposed to help the students notice those points where western and Bangladeshi cultures merge into each other. In case there are any cultural differences found, the teacher should emphasize the logics behind them.

Aims of the lesson:

1. The SVO order: The aim of the lesson is to make students aware of alternative orders that a sentence may have in terms of subject, verb, and object. They will also be able to construct sentences in such orders.
2. Narrative sentence: The students will revise the use of tense in narrating a story or anything from the past.
3. Everyday English: The students will see the differences between formal and informal English.

Brainstorming:

1. Ask your students to look at the pictures carefully and tell them to write down the words or concepts that come to their mind instantly. (Individual task- 3 mins.)

Speaking:

2. Ask the students what they know about culture and the elements that constitute it. (Whole class participation- 5 mins.)
3. Ask them to find some relations between the words they have come up with after seeing the pictures and the elements of a culture. (Whole class participation- 5 mins.)

Listening and reading:

4. Now play the record and ask the students to listen to it carefully without looking at the written version of the poem. Play the record second time and ask them to listen to it and follow the written version at the same time. (5 mins.)
 - i) Now ask the students to form groups (4 in each) and find out the subjects, verbs and objects in each sentence. When they are done, give them feedbacks. (10 mins.)

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- ii) Tell them to find out the inverted sentences, identify the subjects in those sentences, and their significances in the poem. Tell them how they can provide variation in their writing. (10 mins.)
- 5. At this stage, the teacher will critically analyze the poem as a whole-class discussion. Then he/she will ask the students to identify the socio-cultural features reflected in the poem. (20 mins.)
- 6. They will also discuss how the features are similar to those of their own cultural setting. The teacher will continuously put effort to eliminate the differences between western and Bangladeshi culture. (5 mins.)

Writing:

- 7. Ask the students to read the novel excerpt and underline the verbs in past tense. They will see that almost all the verbs are in past tense. Make them notice that while narrating a story, mostly past indefinite/simple tense is used. (10 mins)
- 8. Tell the students to remember any stories they heard from their grandparents as a child and write them down. (15 mins.)
- 9. Ask the students to notice the phrases and expressions in bold letters. Tell them to guess their meanings from the context. Clarify how they can use those in everyday English. (5 mins.)

Speaking



Note: The pictures have been collected from Google Image.

1. Write down the words that instantly come to your mind looking at the above pictures:

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-
2. What do you understand by the word culture? What are the things that constitute a culture?
 3. Do you think that the words you have written in answer to the question no. 1 can be/are elements that constitute a culture?

Listening and Reading

The SVO order:

4. Listen to the recording, then go through the following poem and
 - i) identify the subjects, verbs and objects
 - ii) identify the inverted sentences and write them in the usual order.

*London

- by William Blake

I wander thro' each charter'd street,

Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.



5. What socio-cultural features do you find in the poem?
6. Are there any similarities between the socio cultural features highlighted in the poem and those in your own social setting?

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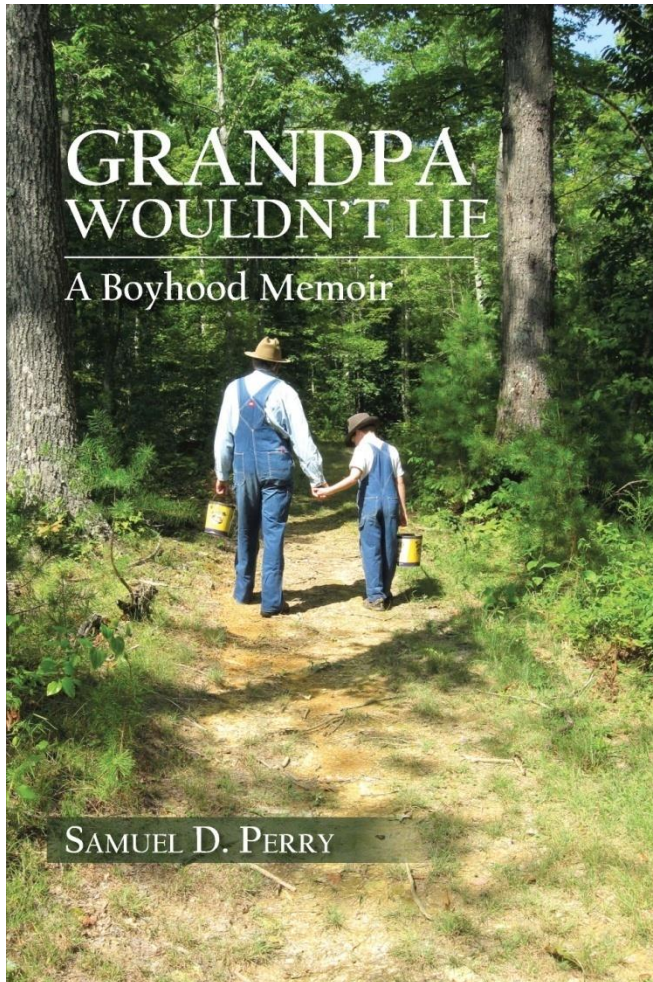
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Writing

Narrative tense and everyday English:

7. In the following **excerpt, identify the verbs in past tense-

Grandpa said that witches are not so common nowadays as they once were. At one time, he said, when he was a boy, there were several of them up and down the Cumberland River that he knew about. They lived by themselves in little houses that somebody had put up in years past, but had moved out of for some reason. They didn't go to church, or pie suppers, but, mostly, just kept to themselves. If you saw one of them at all, which was seldom, you would know, right away, that they were witches.



I asked Grandpa how **a body** could tell a woman from a witch. He said that you could look at their hair. Women always plaited their hair, and put it up behind their head in a bun. Witches didn't do that. They just let their hair fall over their shoulders, like water dropping from **a pourover** in the early spring. Now, wearing hair like that was fine for a young woman who had not found a husband, but not for a married woman. Married women always put their hair up in a bun.

Grandpa said that witches usually had a mean dog living with them. Some of those dogs were so mean they could hamstring a buffalo if they had to. The dogs sat out in front of the witch's house, looking up and down the road, waiting for somebody to come into their yard. **Pity the poor soul that did.**

Every witch had a big iron kettle hanging over a coal pit in the front yard. That wasn't unusual, Grandpa said. Most families had one that they used to boil their clothes in when the time came to wash them. After the clothes were washed, they were hung out on a line to dry in the sun. Witches didn't have a clothesline, and that was **a dead giveaway** that they were witches. Grandpa said he didn't know what they used the iron kettle for, except, maybe to cook up some potion they could use to put a spell on somebody.

8. Do you remember any of the fairytales that your grandparents told you when you were a child? Write down how they would describe the fairies and witches.
9. Notice the words in bold characters. These are some phrases that are used in spoken or everyday English. Can you guess their meanings from the context?

*The poem has been collected from http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/romantics/blake_london.shtml retrieved March 7, 2013

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**The excerpt has been collected from Samuel D. Perry's (2013) *Grandpa Wouldn't Lie* published by AuthorHouse.

Appendix-C

Quiz Test

Duration: 10 mins.

Full marks: 10

A. Underline the *Subjects, Verbs* and *Objects* in the following sentences and write 'S', 'V' and 'O' respectively:

1. After the final song, the drummer hurled his sticks at the crowd.
2. Very slowly, Pandora opened the box.
3. After breakfast, James drove to the mission with Thomas.
4. "Ten thousand saw I at a glance".
5. Poor is the man who has money but does not use it properly.

B. Fill in the blank spaces in the following text with the right form of verbs in brackets:

Last year I (go)_____ to England on holiday. It (feel)_____ fantastic. I (visit)_____ lots of interesting places. I (have)_____ two friends with me. In the mornings, we (walk)_____ in the streets of London. In the evenings, we (watch)_____ movies. The weather (seem)_____ strangely fine. It (not, rain)_____ a lot. But we (see)_____ some beautiful rainbows. Where (you, spend)_____ your last holiday?

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